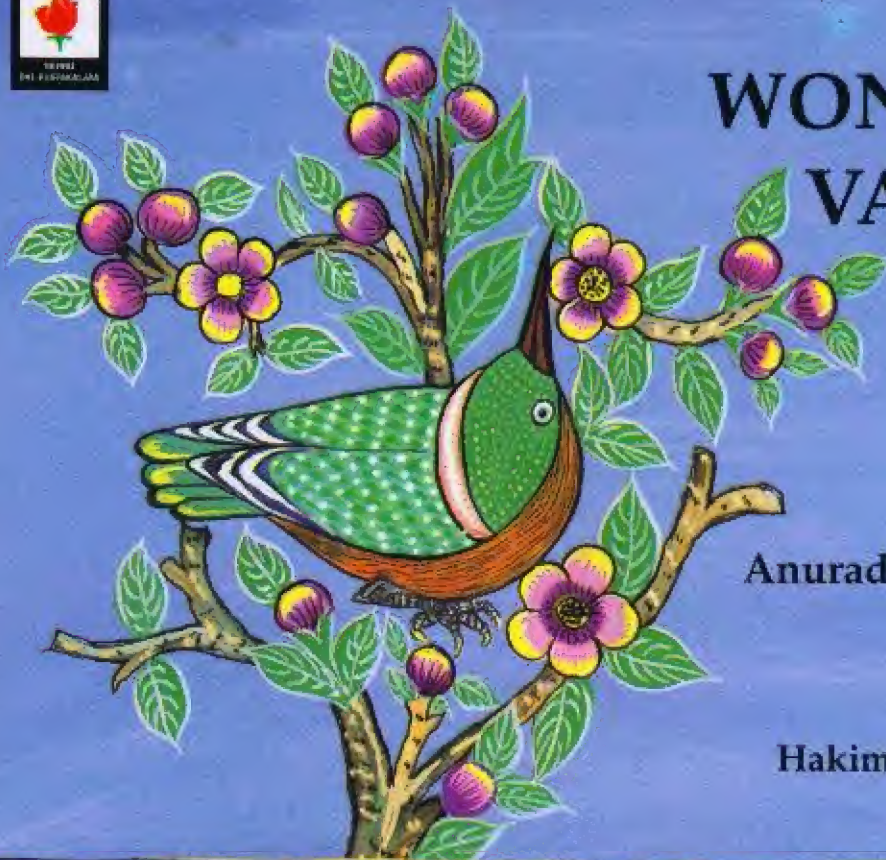


THE WONDERFUL VACATION

Anuradha Bhasin Jamwal

Illustrator
Hakim Gulam Mohammad





Nehru Bal Pustakalaya

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It was winter vacation and the children—Sushil, Sunita and Sagar felt bored sitting at home, having nothing to do except for playing games among themselves. But that was nothing adventurous nor exciting. Most of their friends were away with their families. Their father had a lot of work, so they could not go out this winter like most other times to visit new places.

"Mind you, move out of my way," the domestic help, Savitri, told them as all the three were running inside the house going mad over a pillow fight.

"Oh! Savitri, we have nothing to do." Ignoring their remarks she simply warned, "don't you spoil all the nice pillows and cushions. This is no decent game for children like you."

"Then what do we do?" said Sushil, almost mad with boredom.

"Why don't you go out and play?" she suggested.

"We have been doing it for the last three days. It bores me to death," said Sagar. "There is nothing new or exciting to be done."





"If you have nothing to do, you can all help me in the kitchen and we can try out some nice new recipes."

"I do not like the idea," said Sushil and Sagar together. "Let us just go out and play." They moved and Sunita followed.

"Now, my dear little girl, you must stay back and help me," Savitri said. "Girls like you ought to learn the kitchen work."

"Sorry Savitri," Sunita said and almost ran, afraid that Savitri might insist and she would be left to do all the boring chores in the kitchen.

The children moved into the lawn where Mali-baba was mowing the slightly tall grass. Sushil went ahead to talk to him. "Yes, Master Sushil, what do you have in mind? Are you interested in some tips on gardening?"

"No, Mali-baba," he said rather sadly. "We all have holidays and none of us has any idea what to do."

"Why don't you pluck some nice beautiful flowers and make a bouquet for your mother? It sure will make her happy."





"I don't think that is a good idea," said Sunita. "Mummy already has so many flowers in the house and I don't think there are any more vases to keep them in."

"Since we have nothing else to do, we might as well pick up some of the flowers and make a nice bouquet," suggested Sushil.

The roses were certainly nice and the gladioli so fresh and beautiful. The lawn was blossoming with hundreds of flowers and Mali-baba guided them to the ones that could be plucked, and those that they should not tamper with as they were still very young. When the bouquet was ready, Sagar suggested, "Let us go and give this bouquet where it will be welcomed and loved."

"Where?" asked Sushil.

"You remember that Home for destitutes where all the old aged people live?—they are so lonely and have nothing to do. I am sure they will love it."

Both Sushil and Sunita liked the idea. "If we have nothing exciting to do, might as well do something that may be exciting for those who really need it," said Sushil





and Sunita. "Why don't we pluck extra flowers and make a few more. One bouquet just would not be enough."

So, together they plucked more flowers and bunched them into bouquets and off they went to the Home for the aged people, which was barely a ten minutes walk from their place.

The inmates of the Home were all smiles to see that some young children did care for them. They were deeply touched and they thanked the children. The three children sat with them in the common room and chatted for a while. Some kept quiet, their eyes looking very sad. Some tried to hide the sadness by chatting with the children, asking them where they lived and where they studied. Finally when it was lunch time at the Home, the children got up to go. The old woman, who had suddenly become so fond of them insisted that they stay back for lunch but Sushil politely said that their mother was expecting them back.

Two days later, again the children went to visit the Home with more flowers in their hands. They again sat





chatting. Sushil asked them what they did the whole day. "We just sit, pray, may be talk to each other and sleep or eat... what else can we do in our old age?" One of them answered.

"You mean, you have no entertainment at all, not even television?" Sagar was shocked to hear this.

An old man coughed and said, "there used to be a black and white television set earlier. But it went out of order and we never heard of it again since it went for repairs. We get newspapers once in a while, may be some magazines and read them."

The children felt very sad and rather ashamed of themselves. They had everything in life and yet they always complained. When they reached home they started discussing about the old age home and its inmates and how they were deprived of any entertainment.

"Wish we could buy them a television set or a radio set," said Sagar.

"But even with all our savings we cannot afford to





buy them anything of that sort," cried out Sunita.

"The only thing we can afford to do is buy them tickets to a movie or so with the kind of money we have collected."

Sushil was thinking hard. "Movies! Tickets!" He blurted out "That's it!"

"What are you thinking?" Sunita and Sagar asked him in a chorus. Sushil's eyes were twinkling as he answered. "You know all three of us have been good at plays in school. Let us give them a free show in which we all act and they can atleast enjoy it."

"Yes," said Sagar. But Sunita thought it was not a very good idea, "Just the three of us performing? Doesn't make much sense. We obviously need more people to act in a play. Then some are needed for back-stage too. How do we cope with that?"

"I am sure Mali-baba and Savitri can help back stage," replied Sagar. "And I have a friend from school you remember, Nitin? He could also join us and may be he can get some more people."

Sunita agreed and added, "We can even make it a sort of a charity show, sell tickets to all in the neighborhood. All the money we collect may enable us to buy atleast a radio set for the old people."

So, Sagar left that very moment for Nitin's house and after an hour he came back beaming, proudly announcing that Nitin would come that very evening and bring his two cousin sisters along.

Now there was so much to do. "Where are we going to get the tickets printed?" asked Sunita.

"We don't need to get them printed. We can just ask the people we know and those in the neighbourhood to come and give donations if they would like to," explained Sushil.

"And what about the venue?" enquired Sagar.

"The huge compound and the playground in the premises of the old age home."

The others approved of the idea. So that evening when Nitin came with his cousins, Tamanha and Veena, they began discussing about the play to be enacted. Nitin had



got along some books. So they went through them and finally selected *The Theft at Maryvilla*, which was a one-act play and a comedy.

Of course, Sushil spent the entire night and next day translating it in Hindi, while the others went door to door for inviting people and collecting donations. They did manage to get some money that day.

The preparations for the play began on the third day. Nitin was very good at plays in schools. So he was directing it. The next week was rather hectic, after which the play was to be staged. They used to practice for at least three hours every day. The rest of the day was spent in discussing about the stage settings and the costumes or inviting people. At last the day came. They sought the permission of the manager of the Home, who willingly agreed, just a day before the planned show. All the elderly people of the Home were informed just a day earlier so that they could enjoy the surprise. They were all looking forward to it eagerly.

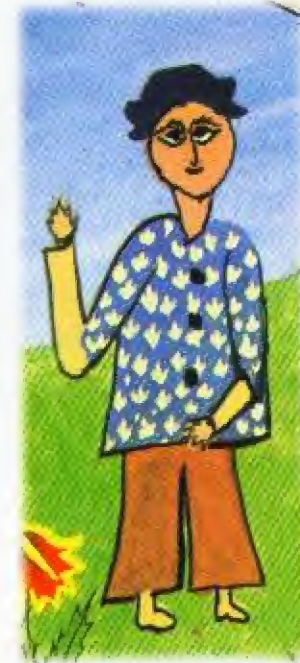




Chairs and everything were arranged after the stage was set with poles and curtains in the verandah while the huge playground in front would be used for the audience. They had kept a provision for hundred seats. About sixty of these were found in the Home. Rest they brought from their respective homes or borrowed from the neighbourhood.

The show was a grand success as all applauded the superb performance and the hilarious moments, which sent the audience reeling in laughter.

After the show, Sushil announced that they had collected Rs. 800 from the donations and by adding their own money to it, they had been able to buy not only a radio set but also a tape recorder. The old people were touched and most delighted. The rest felt proud of such a wonderful group of young children, who had utilised their holidays in doing something for the older generation.





Shri Hakim Ghulam Mohammad (b. 1966), *Kashmir Papier Machie Painter*

The Artist : A resident of Naushera, Srinagar, J&K, Shri Mohammad learnt his art through his own efforts as his family are not practitioners of papier machie crafts. Having studied upto standard IX, he got involved in the art at the age of 16. In his art work, he uses stone colours and actual gold and silver colours. He also uses a handmade brush generally made of the feathers of birds and animals. He has also participated in many workshops and exhibitions.

The Art : The art of papier machie is based on the concept of repulped paper that has been mixed with glue or paste that can be moulded. Beautiful multi-coloured toys, masks, panels, decorative pieces and boxes of different shapes and sizes are made using a variety of intricate designs of the art. Human figures are usually depicted only in hunting scenes, the preferred motifs being floral and bird figures.

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